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U.S. Senator *for* Florida

E- NEWSLETTER

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It is an honor and a privilege to serve as your United States Senator. Thank you for subscribing to my weekly email update - a brief summary of some of the more notable events during the last seven days. I hope you'll find this useful and informative.

If you want to share this newsletter with a friend, sign them up today at <http://LeMieux.Senate.gov>

Health Care Debate Update

Throughout the health care debate, many experts have voiced concerns over the problems with the health care reform bill introduced by Senator Harry Reid (D-NV). We have heard concerns and warnings from Floridians as well as economists and members of the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office. Now, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services - the agency administering Medicare - [has released a report](#) warning that the Democrat plan increases health care costs, "jeopardizes access to care" for seniors, raises insurance premiums, and will result in as many as 17 million Americans losing their coverage.



Most alarming, the report also warns of "plausible and even probable" health care shortages, particularly for seniors and Medicaid patients. Florida has the highest per capita population of seniors in the nation. This plan weakens Medicare instead of strengthening the program.

I have talked with Floridians from Pensacola to Miami and without exception, people are concerned about this bill's proposals to raise taxes, increase health insurance premiums, and cut access to quality care. Citizens tell me they want Congress to scrap this proposal and start over. I agree. We cannot afford the government we have, much less the government this bill seeks to create. We need to be smarter about approaching health care reform and target those areas where we can reduce costs and expand access to health insurance.

I encourage you to read this report for yourself. [Click here to access it](#)

Record-setting year for Racking up the National Debt

This past weekend I urged my colleagues to reject a \$445 billion spending bill for a half-dozen federal agencies because it increases their spending by 12 percent over last year. With the economy in a recession, unemployment at historic highs, and America's families cutting back, our federal government needs to reduce spending. The measure increased federal spending for those agencies by more than \$48 billion, at a time when our national debt is more than \$12 trillion. This isn't the way Congress should be spending. We cannot afford another \$48 billion



it. Click on the image to watch my floor speech.

Because of all this new debt our nation is accumulating, within a few weeks Congress will vote on a proposal to raise the debt ceiling by another \$1.8 trillion. I will vote against raising the debt ceiling because the government needs to stop its irresponsible spending. Congress should have the same enthusiasm for cutting spending as it does for creating new programs.

Tackling the problem of our nation's debt is so critical, I have put a "debt clock" on my Web site as a reminder of the need to rein in government spending. [Click here to take a look](#) at the most current estimate of our nation's debt.

Detained U.S. Citizen in Cuba

The United States is the world's shining example of freedom and it is amazing that 90 miles from Florida, Cuban authorities recently detained a U.S. citizen while he distributed cell phones, laptop computers and other communications equipment to Cuban citizens. Under Raul Castro's regime, the Cuban people are supposedly allowed to own these communications devices.

This is clear evidence the Cuban regime continues to stifle dissent and oppress the basic human rights of its people. Unfortunately, the dictatorial regime of Raul Castro is choosing to harass and detain American citizens while also limiting the Cuban people's access to digital technology. I am concerned for the health and safety of the detained individual and the U.S. ought to demand his immediate release. This detainment should also serve as a warning to those who advocate increasing tourism travel to Cuba before the regime makes progress on their human rights record.

Now more than ever, we need to maintain critical democracy funding in the midst of this crackdown by the Cuban regime. Just last week, my colleagues and I were able to contact critical democracy assistance groups and the Radio and TV Martí

programs - components of our foreign policy that play an important role in furthering the cause of freedom for the Cuban people. The regime's reaction shows our efforts are working.

Florida Legislature's Commitment to High Speed Commuter Rail

The Florida Legislature last week made a substantial investment in Florida's future and opened the door to federal funding for high-speed rail when it passed commuter rail legislation. High-speed rail will mean thousands of good paying jobs for Floridians and a mega-corridor of economic growth between Tampa and



Orlando and eventually all across Florida.

I talked with U.S. Department of Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood last week about Florida's rail projects and encouraged him to look favorably on Florida's application for project funding. At a time when Florida, like other states, is looking for an engine to fuel future economic growth, the need for a competitive advantage is critical. When constructed, a high-speed rail network would not only help Florida maintain its leadership as a global destination for tourists, but it would develop the infrastructure necessary for future economic prosperity.